

Does the 360 Feedback Process Create Actionable Knowledge Equally Across Cultures?

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Essential to an organization's capacity for sustainable growth is the ability of its managers to learn better skills that improve performance. Millions of dollars are spent each year on development initiatives that often fail to transfer into performance gains, primarily due to insufficient support given to the learning transfer process. One initiative used by companies to develop managerial skills is the 360 feedback process. This process has been recognized by some for its value because of its inherent ability to reinforce learning and create actionable knowledge. Some companies have gone so far as to assume that the 360 feedback process will apply equally across cultures. Given that different cultures hold different values, the assumption needs to be examined. The question of cultural relevance for the 360 feedback process was examined across five countries in this study. The results provide support for the overall effectiveness of the 360 process across the combined sample. Comparisons among the five countries, however, revealed important differences. The results were examined based on Hofstede's four work-related values. The 360 feedback process was found to be most effective in cultures with low power distance and individualistic values. The implications for both practice and research are discussed.

The globalization of business has challenged the teachers and practitioners of human resource (HR) management to identify processes and strategies that are effective in divergent cultures. Both HR scholars and practitioners express continued interest in the cultural immunity and the cultural limitations of activities housed within the HR function. Culture has been found to moderate the effectiveness of a variety of international HR processes, including management development (Schneider &

Barsoux, 2003). Management development strategies are difficult to implement successfully in one culture, let alone several cultures. In this study, we sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the 360 feedback process for creating actionable knowledge across cultures.

Actionable knowledge is defined as knowledge that meets scientific rigor and allows individuals "to make informed choices about important practical problems and to implement solutions to them effectively" (Cummings & Jones, 2003: 2). One of the fundamental objectives for the 360 feedback process is to create such knowledge. Although the 360 feedback process is among the best known, most widely used management development techniques (Toegel & Conger, 2003), transferring domestic HR practices to other nations possessing different cultural assumptions and values is problematic at best.

Both 360 feedback and the 360 feedback process

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are used in many organizations (e.g., Church, 1997; London & Beatty, 1993), and in different cultures (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1995; Wilson, Wilson, Booth, & Shipper, 1992). Whereas, both 360 feedback and the 360 feedback process involve (1) the collection of data from peers, superiors, direct reports, and self; and (2) the reporting of that information to participants via a report, the 360 feedback process goes further and involves; (3) follow-up training and support; (4) the recollection of the data from peers, superiors, direct reports, and self; and (5) the reporting of that information to participants via a report. Thus, the feedback represents a beginning rather than an end of a personal development cycle aligning behavior with organizational objectives.

Despite the use of 360 feedback and the 360 feedback process in many different cultures, research has focused on North American populations or ignored cultural implications (e.g., Church, 1997; Shipper & Neck, 1990). Assuming that 360 feedback can be interpreted similarly in different cultures may be incorrect. In some Asian cultures, for example, criticism is to be avoided. The 360 feedback process depends heavily on the way feedback is perceived and processed and on the willingness of the recipient to engage in self-reflection (Bailey, Saporito, Kressel, Christensen, & Hooijberg, 1997; Centra, 1993; Church, 1997; Toegel & Conger, 2003; Yammarino & Atwater, 1993).

The nature of the feedback process, too, is quite possibly culturally dependent. Significantly higher self- and subordinate ratings of managers are found in Asian cultures than are reported in American or European ones (Wilson, Wilson, Booth, & Shipper, 1992). Asian cultures are more "being" oriented (take things as given), whereas Anglo cultures are more "doing" oriented (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961); hence, critical feedback may be viewed in the latter culture as something upon which one must act. Investigation of the cultural variations in the actionable knowledge created through a 360 feedback process would appear to be sorely needed. In this study, we provide both administrative and pedagogical insights for those who manage or study HR activities across borders.

Creation of Actionable Knowledge

Managerial effectiveness is a practical problem and issue of concern in any organizational setting. Enormous amounts of money are spent on consultants and on development programs in the hopes of gaining more effective, productive managers. Evaluating the benefits of development activities is challenging; this leaves room for questions

about the utility of management development. The opportunities to evaluate improvements become easier with a 360 feedback process because pre- and postassessments of the managers' skills, employees' attitudes, and the managers' performance are incorporated in the system. Indeed, long-lasting improvements in managerial skills and performance indicators have been found when 360 feedback processes were implemented (Green, 2002; Thach, 2002).

Management development in large corporations is not the exclusive use of multisource evaluation data. Promotion and tenure decisions in colleges and universities incorporate evaluations from chairpeople and students over 80% of the time (Seldin, 1989). While in many educational settings, multisource data are already incorporated into tenure and promotion processes, the data gathered and procedures followed are normally much less formal and unstandardized than would be the case with a true 360 feedback process. By formalizing the collection, summarization, and feedback reporting procedures, instructional performance can also be enhanced with a 360 feedback process. Given the heightened interest on assessment of learning outcomes in business education, a 360 feedback process would provide a rich set of data to evaluate business curriculum.

In contrast, the prevalence of 360 feedback in undergraduate and graduate business education is limited (Boyatzis, Cowen, & Kolb, 1995; Shipper, 1999), both as course content or as a development tool. We contend that the 360 feedback process has significant pedagogical and programmatic relevance and is perhaps an untapped tool in classroom settings. Particularly in MBA courses, the 360 feedback process represents a relevant content topic for management students, and it can serve as a tool for the students' own self-development through the MBA program. Perhaps the best example is the approach used by Boyatzis in the MBA program at Case Western University. Students gain insight into the process of 360 feedback while experiencing both its costs and benefits on a personal and conceptual level.

The number of MBA programs offered outside the United States is growing fast and is being matched by an increase in international MBA partnerships developed by U.S. institutions of higher education. As more MBA students gain international experience, the need to improve the students' self-awareness and interpersonal skills within varied cultural settings becomes more critical. Involving students in the experience of a 360 feedback process is likely to enhance learning. However, the

potential for cultural limitations extends to the classroom as it may for organizational HR systems.

The Current Study

Our research effort employed a 360 feedback process to explore its effect on learning and knowledge transfer across different cultures. The 360 feedback process used here incorporates Wilson's management task cycle theory, which is based on Tolman's (1932) learning theory and Bolles's (1972) updating of it (Wilson, O'Hare, & Shipper, 1990). The skill sets in the management task cycle are labeled *controlling skills* and *interactive skills*. Prior research on the Wilson model has validated the skills and demonstrated their impact on managerial performance (Shipper & Wilson, 1992; Shipper, 2004; Shipper, Kincaid, Rotondo, & Hoffman, 2003).

Controlling skills enhance performance by facilitating control of details, use of goal pressure, and monitoring of results. Interactive skills represent the supportive, interpersonal behaviors that ensure positive relations and employee satisfaction, such as performance feedback, participation, communication, and coaching. Controlling and interactive skills are similar to the terms *task behavior* and *relationship behavior* common to the leadership literature, except the focus in the 360 feedback process is on *how well* the manager does something as opposed to *how frequently* the manager does something. This approach is taken due to conceptual (e.g., Van Velsor & Leslie, 1991; Yukl, 1994) and research (e.g., Shipper & White, 1999) support for focusing on the importance of competency over frequency of managerial skills. Furthermore, both conceptual and research support can be found for the essentiality of both interactive and controlling skills (Judge, Piccolo, & Ilies, 2004; Shipper, 2004; Shipper, Davy, Hoffman, & Rotondo, 2005; Shipper & Wilson, 1992). Highly effective (or "ideal") managers would possess and use both skill sets; something which has been hypothesized, refined, and cross-culturally validated by a series of studies (e.g., Shipper, 2004; Shipper, Davy, Hoffman, & Rotondo, 2005; Wilson, 1978; Wilson, O'Hare, & Shipper, 1990).

Managers who participated in the 360 feedback process were given performance feedback in the form of a report summarizing the data from multiple sources. The report was provided to the participants as part of a 1-day workshop. By the end of the day the participants were encouraged to have developed a preliminary learning agenda. To further develop the learning agendas, each participant was encouraged to share the results with

his/her superior, peers, and subordinates, and based on that input, to finalize his/her learning agenda. As part of the learning contract, participants were expected to experiment with different skills and techniques, to practice them, and to receive feedback from their subordinates and peers. The organization also provided additional skill training support via a variety of sources. After a period of time, the participant's performance was assessed again to determine the level and impact of learning that had occurred.

To build trusting relationships groups of managers from the same facility were organized into intact teams, asked to share problems and develop action plans to solve them. Members of the team who most resembled the ideal manager, with balanced sets of interactive and controlling skills, were asked to serve as mentors to others.

This process parallels the Boyatzis self-directed learning model (Boyatzis, 1999; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). This model as it pertains to the 360 feedback process is portrayed in Figure 1. For our purposes, *learning* is defined as the creation of actionable knowledge, and Figure 1 depicts where actionable knowledge would be acquired. The 360 feedback process is dynamic and iterative, providing for continuous feedback on skill use to allow for future changes in behaviors. In the next section, we discuss the model and its cultural relevance in more detail.

Assessing Actionable Knowledge

To assess the creation of actionable knowledge in a 360 feedback process, Kirkpatrick's (1959) evaluation model can be applied with some minor modification. Kirkpatrick's model is recognized as one of the most influential assessments of development interventions (Smither, Houston, & McIntire, 1996). Kirkpatrick identifies the first level of criteria as *reactions*, the second level as *cognitions*, the third level as *behaviors*, and the fourth level as *outcomes*. We incorporate these levels of knowledge into the learning model in Figure 1. Seen from the 360 feedback process perspective, participants must interpret and process the feedback information prior to establishing an agenda for planned change. The skill development that follows promotes learning and behavioral change, in turn expected to yield higher performance outcomes.

Receiving feedback alone (i.e., 360 feedback) without the subsequent development intervention processes is likely to result in, at best, a first level, or reactionary, success. Moving beyond reaction to establishing awareness of what needs to change and effectuating those changes as evidenced in

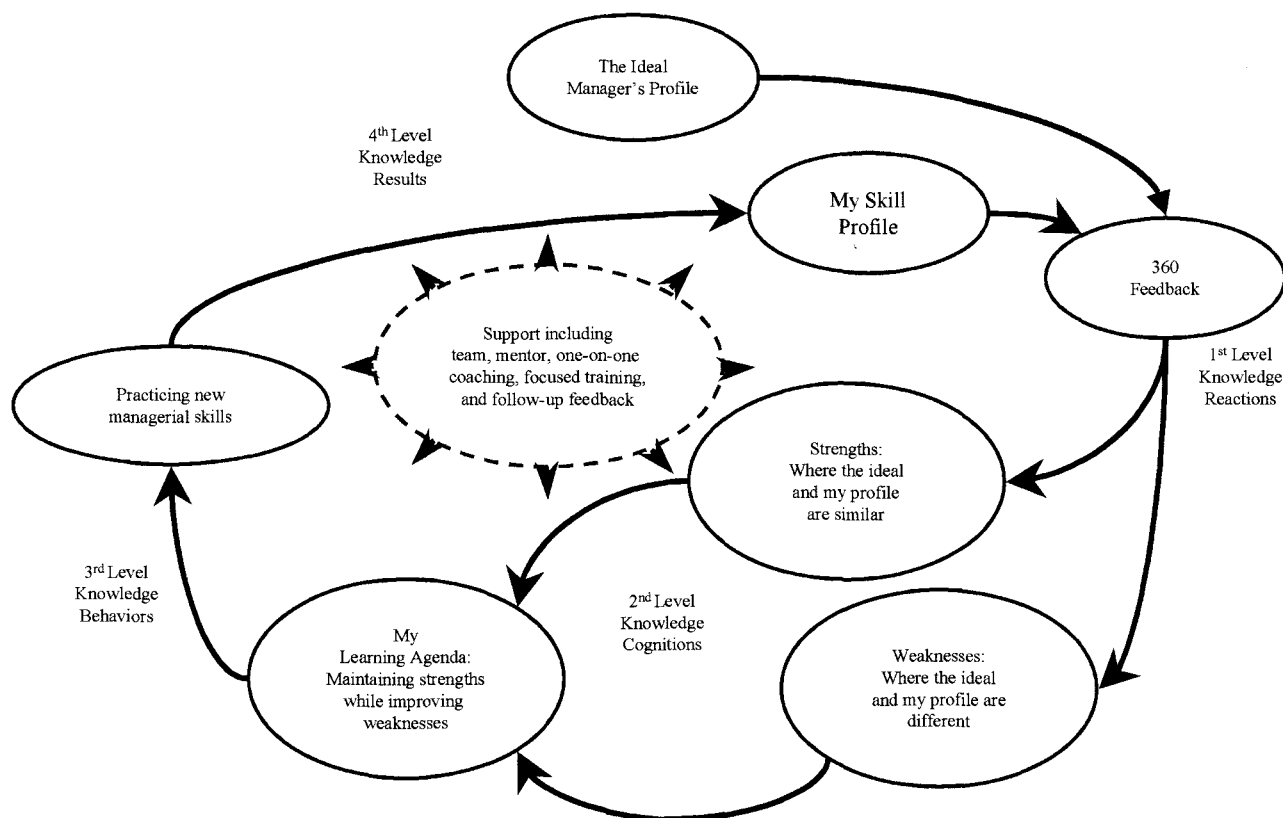


FIGURE 1

360 Feedback Process Learning model. Adapted from Boyatzis R., *Self-Directed Change and Learning as a Necessary Meta-Competency for Success and Effectiveness in the 21st Century*. In R. Sims & J. G. Veres, III (Eds.), *Keys to Employee Success in the Coming Decades*. © 1999 by Ronald R. Sims & John G. Veres, III. Adapted with permission of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., Westport, CT.

behaviors and outcomes is critical to validating the 360 feedback process as a tool for delivering actionable knowledge. We hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1: Overall, the general 360 feedback process will be associated with improvements in reactions, cognitions, behaviors, and outcomes.

The 360 Feedback Process Across Cultures

The success of the 360 feedback process predicted in H1 above is not without qualification. In particular, the nature of the intervention process is quite possibly culturally dependent. Culture has been found to affect a variety of international HR processes including management development (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003), performance appraisals (Milliman, Nason, Gallagher, Hou, Von Glinow, & Lowe, 1998) and organizational development programs (Lau & Ngo, 2001). Multinational firms (MNCs) need a cadre of capable managers who can adjust to multiple cultures and work effectively in multinational teams (Earley & Peterson,

2004). However, home country HR practices may not be transferable to host nations possessing different cultural assumptions and values. As a result, these practices may have a detrimental effect on the ability to create actionable knowledge and achieve better performance.

We define *culture* as the pattern of values and beliefs that may affect the behaviors of the peoples in a given region. Hofstede (2001) provides four empirically tested values that seem to distinguish between cultures; moreover, they have been found to be relevant in explaining observed differences in IHR practices of MNCs (Ferner, 1997). Briefly, *power distance* refers to the social stratification within a society such that higher status individuals or groups are accorded more power and authority by those of lower status. *Uncertainty avoidance* refers to a society's fear of the unknown or ambiguous situations. *Individualism* refers to the identity of self as based either solely on the individual or on the individual as part of a group or collective. *Masculinity* refers to a society's preference for competition and outcomes (masculine values) as op-

posed to cooperation and process (feminine values). These empirically based cultural dimensions have been widely used in the literature (Clark, 1990; Sivakumar & Nakata, 2001) and offer a way to discuss potential cultural differences in a meaningful and widely accepted manner.

Culture is likely to affect the 360 feedback process in two fundamental ways. First and foremost, the nature of the process of seeking and providing multiple sources of feedback is based on values and assumptions not equally shared by all cultures. Second, since we examine a variety of outcomes at various stages of the 360 feedback process, the relationship of these outcomes to various cultural values may also come into play. The model depicted in Figure 2 reveals the possible relationships of cultural values to the 360 feedback process and its evaluation.

The 360 feedback process is a relatively new management development process that is focused on individual managers. High uncertainty-avoidance cultures tend to be skeptical of new innovations of any kind. In addition, training programs aimed at individuals are apt to be less effective for those cultures holding collective values (Earley,

1994; Lau & Ngo, 2001). As Hofstede (2001: 241) noted, training methods that involve the sharing of feelings about other people "are unfit for use in collective cultures." Thus, one would expect the outcomes associated with the use of 360 feedback processes to vary among cultures holding values different from those implicit to the process. These relationships are discussed more fully below.

Evaluating 360 Feedback in Cross-Cultural Settings

By focusing closely on the four levels of criteria (i.e., reactions, cognitions, behaviors, and outcomes) useful in evaluating developmental interventions, the points at which cultural differences become important may be revealed. We reviewed prior multilevel research to identify concepts that had been used as dependent variables of learning (e.g., Brett & Atwater, 2001; Seifert, Yukl, & McDonald, 2003; Shipper & Davy, 2002; Shipper, Kincaid, Rotondo, & Hoffman, 2003; Shipper & Neck, 1990). From that review we selected concepts that could also represent each level of learning. The hypotheses are framed broadly to incorporate all

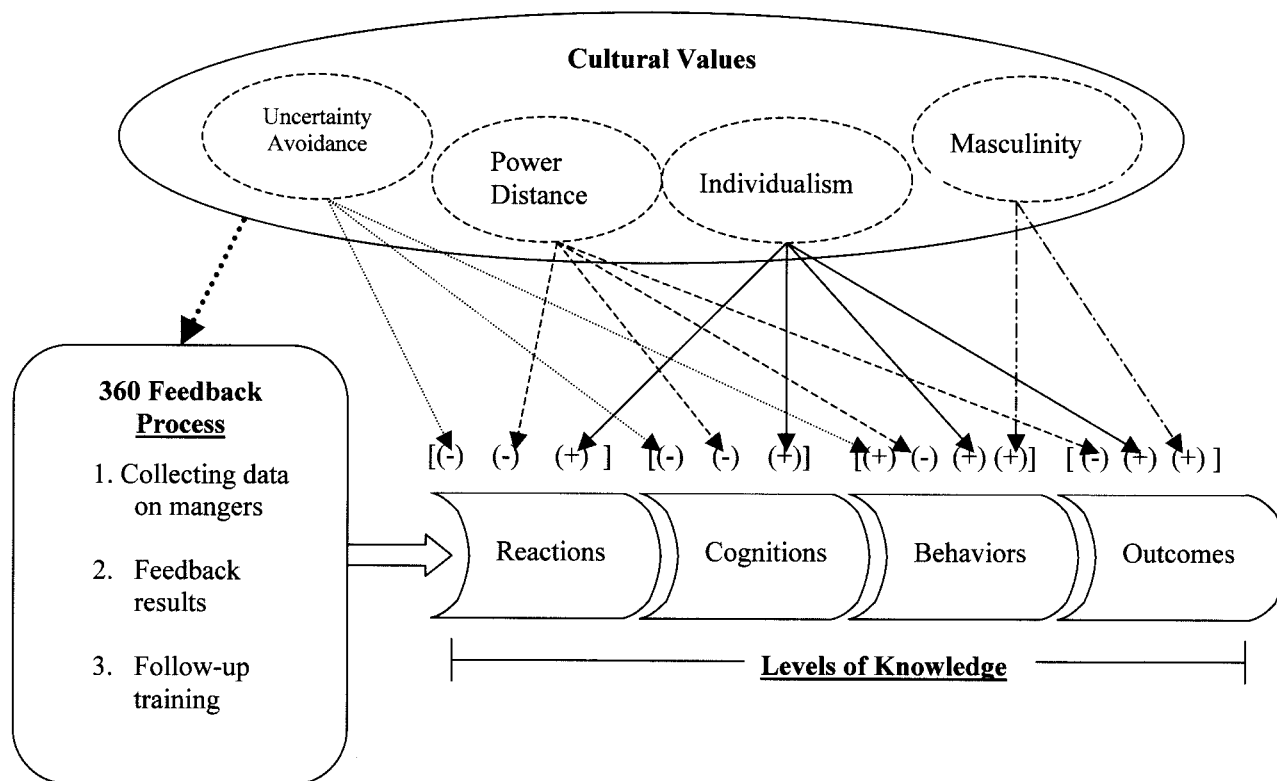


FIGURE 2

Culture's Influences on Knowledge Levels Derived From the 360 Process. Note. + = denotes a positive relationship with knowledge level in presence of a given value. - = denotes a negative relationship with knowledge level in presence of a given value.

the values that seem to be the most salient to the level of evaluation under consideration rather than to offer a subhypothesis for each cultural dimension separately. This is done for two reasons: First, there simply is not enough evidence of the impact of each cultural variable on the processes investigated, and second, it is often difficult to tease out the impact of each cultural variable on each level of the process due to their potential confounding effects.

Internalizing the 360 Feedback Process

The process of gathering data on a manager's skills and performance assumes that people have a certain degree of comfort interacting at a variety of hierarchical levels as well as the ability to identify an individual's performance apart from that of others. The former suggests low power distance values, while the latter suggests a society in which an individual perceives a great deal of control over his environment and hence, outcomes. Researchers (Bourgeois & Boltvinik, 1981; Harzing, 1997) have found that managers from high power distance cultures are reluctant to provide information to someone who is not a superior. People from collective societies, such as those in East Asia are less likely to be able to assess individual performance apart from that of the group (Lau & Ngo, 2001); furthermore, peers in collective cultures may be reluctant to be critical of a group member for fear of upsetting group harmony (Hofstede, 2001).

The next step in the 360 feedback process is to report information to the participants. If this information is reported by a superior, it is likely to be more acceptable in high power distance cultures (Harzing, 1997). However, in cultures that have collective values, the information may even be perceived negatively. In a collective society, critical information might cause a person to "lose face" within the group (e.g., Bourgeois & Boltvinik, 1981), and feedback on performance assumes that one has considerable control over one's own behaviors or outcomes (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003). This assumption does not hold in cultures where external factors are perceived to affect one's outcomes.

Reactions

Reactions are normally assessed by the participants' affective responses (via structured questionnaires) at a single point in time relative to the intervention. In this study, we propose to assess changes in employees' attitudes—commitment, morale, and tension—before and after the intervention to explore the effectiveness of 360 feedback

processes. The logic for this modification is twofold. First, most research on participant reactions to 360 feedback demonstrates that participant reaction is a function of the favorableness of the feedback (Green, 2002; Molleman & Timmerman, 2003). Second, the feedback received by the manager should spark a reaction consistent with the attitudinal elements of the data provided by subordinates juxtaposed against the expected versus unexpected nature of the information.

The potential for 360 feedback process intervention to create actionable knowledge for managers may be greatest when unexpected negative attitudes (or less "positive" attitudes) are uncovered in the report. If the process indeed drives learning and improvements in managers' behaviors, the employees, as consumers of those improvements, should affectively respond positively. In the ideal, if a manager is disappointed in the attitudes reported by his subordinates and is sufficiently motivated to make positive behavioral changes while learning new skills important to performance, employees should report more favorable attitudes as feedback is gathered in subsequent rounds. As the 360 feedback process unfolds, effective managers will see increases in commitment and morale along with decreased employee tension.

Such outcomes are based on a uniform assumption that feedback is welcome and viewed as valid and constructive. Cultural values should influence whether feedback is perceived as valid data and useful information for guiding future behaviors or performance. For example, if feedback from subordinates is viewed as critical, managers from high power distance cultures are not likely to accept feedback from subordinates (Harzing, 1997), leading to possible negative reactions to the process (see Fig. 2 dotted arrow from PD to reactions). Furthermore, feedback could cause members of collective cultures to lose face (Bourgeois & Boltvinik, 1981), especially if managers are encouraged to share results with others as is prescribed as part of the development and learning process. Members of collective cultures show a greater emotional dependence on organizational members (Hofstede, 2001); therefore, any process that might be perceived as negatively affecting group harmony is likely to have an adverse affect on dependence or commitment in such cultures (see Fig. 2 solid arrow from individualism to reactions). Finally, more worry or tension is associated with higher levels of uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 2001). Thus, tension may vary with levels of uncertainty avoidance (see Fig. 2 dotted arrow from UA to reactions). If the culture does not possess values consistent with the 360 feedback process, it is not likely to elicit posi-

tive reactions from the participants or the subordinates. The following hypothesis is offered:

Hypothesis 2: The 360 feedback process will elicit stronger positive reactions in nations having values consistent with the 360 process, such as low power distance, low uncertainty avoidance, and individualism.

Cognitions

One of the primary recognized goals of the 360 feedback process is to increase self-awareness. Self-awareness is the cornerstone of personal and professional development, critical to achieving higher performance outcomes. Before one can enact new (more desirable) behaviors—that is learn new behavioral patterns—the cognitive processes necessary to analyze a situation and the ability to understand the feelings and needs of others affected in a situation must be present (Wolff, Pescosolido, & Druskat, 2002). A hallmark of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995), self-awareness has been tied to managerial success and derailment (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992; Green, 2002; Shipper & Dillard, 2000), and thus, such scores are commonly given as part of the feedback to managers in the 360 feedback process. Self-awareness is evidenced through the level of agreement between the participant manager and the direct reports on the manager's use of controlling and interactive skills at work.

Prior research on self-awareness has shown that manager-subordinate agreement on controlling and interactive skills is associated with higher managerial performance, even when the skill levels were reported to be low by both parties (Shipper, Kincaid, Rotondo, & Hoffman, 2003). This suggests that self-awareness is extremely important to a manager's ability to both adapt and apply new knowledge and skills because it reflects a higher level of emotional intelligence, and it contributes to effective leadership (Dearborn, 2002; George, 2000).

Improvements in self-awareness are expected with the 360 feedback process, as indicated by greater agreement in manager-subordinate ratings of interactive and controlling skills. As the participant manager has the opportunity to compare self-ratings with other ratings, attention can be given to areas of disagreement. An outcome of the learning process for the manager when feedback is gathered for subsequent rounds is greater agreement—or higher self-awareness. While self-awareness per se is not culturally determined, the ability and the desire to reconcile differences in

self-other perceptions are very likely to be influenced by culture.

The cultural impact of the 360 feedback process on self-other agreement will vary due to the nature of feedback and because the concept of *self* is perceived differently across cultures. As mentioned above, the source of feedback data, the process of distributing and sharing feedback data, and the willingness to accept and act upon feedback data are culturally dependent. Seeking higher self-awareness (that is, less disagreement between self and other ratings) is desired only when the other ratings have legitimacy as a source of valid and constructive performance information. Hofstede (2001) also points out that the concept of self in collectivist cultures is perceived differently than in individualistic cultures (see Fig. 2 solid arrow from individualism to cognitions). Emotional stability and well-being, crucial to self-awareness, tend to be associated with low uncertainty avoidance (see Fig. 2 dotted arrow from UA to cognitions) cultures (Lynn & Martin, 1995). People from high power distance cultures are less willing to share information with someone who is not a superior (Harzing, 1997). Shipper, Kincaid, Rotondo, and Hoffman (2003) have recently found that self-awareness of interactive and controlling skills is stronger in low power distance cultures (see Fig. 2 dashed arrow from PD to cognitions). For these reasons assessments of self-awareness based upon agreement of self and other ratings may be inaccurate in some cultures.

Hypothesis 3: The 360 feedback process will generate stronger positive changes in self-awareness of interactive and controlling skills among managers in nations with low power distance, low uncertainty avoidance and/or individualistic values.

Behaviors

The assessment of changes in behaviors is ideally suited for the 360 feedback process because both pre- and postmeasures of the managers' skills are evaluated. A skill is an observable competence, which implies a behavior or behavioral set is observable in one possessing the skill and not observable in one lacking the skill.

Follow-up training to help the manager improve skills and performance uncovered in the first two steps is essential to the 360 feedback process. The 360 feedback process focuses attention forward on setting learning agendas using peer (intact) teams or mentors to support skill development. The gathering of performance data at more than one point

in time also provides a real measure of behavioral change viewed from multiple perspectives.

Indicated in H1 (behaviors), managers who develop better interactive and controlling skills are likely to be better performers. The skill sets may not be uniformly important in different cultures though. The 360 feedback process may not lead to future improvements (or changes) in a given skill set if the behaviors included in that set are culturally undesirable or improper. Alternatively, if the data are not seen as valid or are too critical, the follow-up training in collective cultures is not likely to yield the desired outcomes. The subsequent steps of data collection and feedback are subjected to similar cultural assumptions and values described in the first two steps above.

Considerable research has been conducted on a variety of leadership and management skills. In a summary of this research, Hofstede (2001) observed that the use of interactive skills (e.g., communication, delegation, and coaching) was positively associated with low power distance and individualistic values (see Fig. 2 respective dashed and solid arrows for these values and behaviors). Controlling skills (e.g., goal pressure and control of details) have been associated with high uncertainty avoidance or masculine (see Fig. 2 arrows from these values to behaviors) values (Shipper, Kincaid, Rotondo, & Hoffman, 2003). Thus, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 4a: The 360 feedback process will yield stronger positive changes in the use of interactive skills among managers in nations with low power distance and/or individualism.

Hypothesis 4b: The 360 feedback process will yield stronger positive changes in the use of controlling skills among managers in nations with higher uncertainty avoidance and/or masculine values.

Outcomes

The assessment of outcomes can be measured in terms of managerial effectiveness as reported by the managers' superiors and subordinates. If actionable cognitions and positive behavioral changes have taken place, the manager should be more effective and the manager's raters should be able to observe that improvement. Higher performance and greater effectiveness are certainly the ultimate goals of the 360 feedback process. If the process has been effective in creating actionable knowledge, effectiveness ratings should increase

for participants of the process (included in H1 as outcomes). In addition, knowledge of improved effectiveness ratings should reinforce the need to continue behavioral improvements.

The predominant values of 360 feedback processes favor low power distance and individualistic cultures. Improved managerial effectiveness would be expected in those contexts. HR interventions targeted toward individuals have been found to be more successful in nations with individualistic and masculine values (Lau & Ngo, 2001). Given the reluctance of people from high power distance cultures to criticize or evaluate those at higher levels (Hofstede, 2001), we would expect those effectiveness ratings to be further impacted by cultural differences (see Fig. 2 different arrows from the respective values to outcomes).

Hypothesis 5a: The 360 feedback process will result in a greater positive change in a manager's effectiveness as rated by the superior in cultures having low power distance, individualistic, and/or masculine values.

Hypothesis 5b: The 360 feedback process will result in a greater positive change in a manager's effectiveness as rated by the subordinates in cultures having low power distance values.

Summary

In the present study we seek to understand whether the 360 feedback process, a common management development technique, can create actionable knowledge for a participant and enable learning to occur. Second, the cultural relevancy of the 360 feedback process is explored. Across several cultural dimensions, we tested for differences in reaction, cognitions, and behavioral change within the 360 feedback process. Our methods used to test the hypotheses are discussed next.

METHODS

Sample

This study was conducted using managerial employees in a large multinational corporation. The sample consisted of indigenous managers from five countries: Ireland (117), Israel (171), Malaysia (285), the Philippines (172), and the United States (2287). Twenty-four percent of the sample was female. On average, the managers were 39 years old with 10 years of service with the company. The numbers vary in the various analyses due to missing data. These samples were considered to be

appropriate for testing whether the 360 feedback process creates actionable knowledge equally across cultures because they represent contrasting cultures based on Hofstede's values (see Table 1).

Nations in our sample low on power distance include Ireland and Israel, while Malaysia and the Philippines are both high on the value, and the United States is in between these extremes. Regarding uncertainty avoidance, Ireland and Malaysia are low, while Israel is high, and the other two nations are moderate. The United States and Ireland are both individualistic societies, while Malaysia and the Philippines are collective societies, with Israel in between these two groups. Last, the United States, Ireland, and the Philippines have masculine values, while Israel and Malaysia combine masculine with feminine values. These differences suggest a fair amount of cultural variation among the nations sampled. Hofstede's (2001) dimensions are developed from means and percentages on each item, making up a value dimension taken at the societal level, thus, representing system (societal level) versus individual level indices. These indices emphasize between (versus within) culture correlations or differences and are, therefore, useful for discussing cultural differences among the nations in our sample. For the statistical procedure described below, "country" was used as a categorical independent variable. In all five countries, the organization emphasizes performance and appropriate rewards for managers. In addition, due to the company competing in an industry with a short product life cycle, the typical organizational structure is best described as a taskforce that lasts fewer than 5 years. Dress of both the managers and employees tends to be casual throughout the company.

Measures

Managerial skills were assessed using a structured questionnaire, The Survey of Management Practices (Form LB) to collect observations (Wilson & Wilson, 1991). It was chosen for its comprehensive nature and psychometric soundness (Leslie & Fleenor, 1998; Morrison, McCall, & DeVries, 1978; Shipper, 1995; Shipper & White, 1999; Van Velsor & Leslie, 1991).

Prior researchers have examined the questionnaire and found its test-retest reliability, internal consistency, interrater reliability, construct validity, and criterion validity to be acceptable (Shipper, 1995; Shipper & White, 1999; Wilson, 1978). For example, all scales within the instrument have been reported in prior studies to exceed Nunnally's (1978) criteria of .70 for reliability. In addition, the structure of the questionnaire has been found to be stable within and across cultures (Shipper, 2004; Shipper, Kincaid, Rotondo, & Hoffman, 2003).

The instrument has been used in other cross-cultural studies of managerial skills (Offermann & Hellmann, 1997; Shipper, 2004; Shipper, Kincaid, Rotondo, & Hoffman, 2003) and is available in a number of languages including Bahasa Malaysia, English, Spanish, Mandarin Simplified, and Tagalog.

The questionnaire consists of 71 items of which 59 were used in this study. Forty-four of these items were selected because they constitute the scales for managerial skills found in the managerial task cycle model (Wilson, O'Hare, & Shipper, 1990). Eleven additional items that measure employee attitudes—commitment, morale and tension—were used. Furthermore, four other items were selected because they are indicators of managerial effectiveness. Both the employees' and the manag-

TABLE 1
Cultural Values of National Samples

Cultural Values	United States	Ireland	Israel	Philippines	Malaysia
Power distance: degree of inequality among social levels and acceptance of authority	Low/Med. (40)	Low (28)	Low (13)	High (94)	High (104)
Uncertainty avoidance: fear of the unknown or ambiguity	Low/Med. (46)	Low (35)	High (81)	Med. (44)	Low (36)
Individualism: identity based on the individual versus a group	Individual (91)	Individual (72)	Indiv./Coll. (54)	Collective (32)	Collective (26)
Masculinity: preference for competition and results (masculine) versus cooperation and quality (feminine)	Masculine (62)	Masculine (68)	Mas./Fem. (47)	Masculine (64)	Mas./Fem. (50)

Source: Hofstede (2001) reported greater variation across than within nations on individual items defining these values. Within nation deviations were usually less than .70 (5-point scale). Using his data we calculated the standard deviation of these values for our sampled nations above and found an average across nation deviation of 1.07. These findings suggest greater heterogeneity across than within nations.

ers' superiors' responses to the latter four items were used in this study. The superiors' responses were used as a separate criterion variable to mitigate the problem of common source variance. The latter set of items is discussed in more detail below.

Specific skills used in this study—interactive and controlling—were taken from prior research. These measures were developed through cluster analysis and have been found to be stable (Shipper & Wilson, 1992; Shipper, 2004; Shipper, Kincaid, Rotondo, & Hoffman, 2003).

The measurement of self-awareness is the absolute difference between the perceptions of the direct reports for the measures of interactive and controlling skills and the self-reported perceptions of the same skills.

For statistical testing, change scores were used for the dependent variable. The change score is simply the difference between the two scores as measured in the first and second administration of the Survey of Management Practices.

Data Collection

Data for this study were electronically collected via the Internet. Each respondent was allowed to respond in English or the native language or languages of the country. The translated instruments have been used by the multinational firm for some time prior to this study and were developed by translation professionals according to normal translation and back-translation procedures and extensively pretested prior to this study. The benefits of well-translated instruments far outweigh the negatives. Respondents tend to respond more like a native when using their own language as opposed to a second language (Marin, Triandis, Betancourt, & Kashima, 1983). Translation errors tend to be randomized as the number of language versions increase (Hofstede, 2001). The use of summated scales as in this study tends to cancel out response bias due to language (Prince & Mombour, 1967). Finally, the psychometric properties of the scales used here have been found to be stable across cultures as noted in the section above. The procedure used for collecting the data involved the use of a secure server and passwords for the manager and other respondents. The process was explained to all involved. The direct reports of each manager, and the manager were asked to respond to the SMP. The response rate of the associates was 63%. The associates' response rate by country was 65% for Ireland, 65% for Israel, 62% for Malaysia, 53% for the Philippines, and 64% for the United States. In addition, each manager's superior was

asked the four questions regarding the group's effectiveness described previously.

After the first collection of data, managers participated in a 1-day feedback session and other development activities described above. These development activities were modeled after those used in two of the four multilevel, pre-post studies identified by Seifert, Yukl, and McDonald (2003) as having shown significant improvements. Those two studies were reported in Wilson, O'Hare, and Shipper (1990). Additional description of the training activities can be found in Wilson and Shipper (1992).

Approximately 18 months later, the survey was readministered. The time lag on prior multilevel studies has varied from 3 to 48 months, with an average lag of 13.4 months (Seifert, Yukl, & McDonald, 2003). Eighteen months was chosen for this study to try to demonstrate that changes were long term. Because learning is often characterized by a permanent change in behavior, a longer time period assesses the relative permanence of changes better than a shorter time period. Taylor, Russ-Eft, and Chan (2005) have called for studies that assess training effects for periods greater than 1 year out, something our approach satisfies.

Analysis

Prior researchers, as well as this study (See Table 2), have found high correlations among variables collected via 360 feedback (Brett & Atwater, 2001). Therefore, the scales of interest were tested for discriminant validity using confirmatory factor analysis. The results of this analysis yielded a Bentler-Bonett Normed Fit Index of .943, a Bentler-Bonett Non-Normed Fit Index of .944, and a Comparative Fit Index of .951. In addition, each pair of scales was tested for discriminant validity by using a *z* test to examine each pair's covariance and the associated standard error (Bentler, 1992). The results of these analyses suggested discriminant validity for all scales. In addition, to test for independence among the nine variables in Table 2 Hotelling's *T* was performed. The results ($F = 7.19$, $df = 9, 4683$, $p \leq .001$) suggest independence among the nine variables.

To test the hypotheses, we used two forms of statistical analysis. First, a *t* test is used to test for statistical differences in actionable knowledge between times t_1 and t_2 for the overall sample. The purpose of the first analysis was to demonstrate that overall results are in agreement with prior research. This procedure does not control for all other possible sources of variation; however, we deemed it sufficient to verify H1 given that prior

TABLE 2
Correlations Matrix for Measures at t_1 ($n \geq 1881$)

Variables	Commitment	Morale	Tension	Interactive Self-Awareness	Controlling Self-Awareness	Interactive Skills	Controlling Skills	Effectiveness as Rated by Superior	Effectiveness as Rated by Direct Reports
Commitment	1								
Morale	.688**	1							
Tension	-.280**	-.480**	1						
Interactive Self-Awareness	.035*	-.050**	.044*	1					
Controlling Self-Awareness	.040*	.031	-.024	.351**	1				
Interactive Skills	.600**	.638**	-.393**	-.100**	-.006	1			
Controlling Skills	.329**	.268**	.118**	.030	.023	.430**	1		
Effectiveness as Rated by Superior	.182**	.146**	-.116**	-.028	-.021	.136**	-.033	1	
Effectiveness as Rated by Direct Reports	.808**	.648**	-.305**	.002	.006	.645**	.326**	.216**	1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level, 2-tailed.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, 2-tailed.

studies have tested and acknowledged the effectiveness of the 360 feedback process.

Second, a one-way analysis of variance including a Duncan's multiple range test was used to determine if there are differences in actionable knowledge created by the 360 feedback process across cultures. Duncan's multiple range tests allowed us to determine if significant differences existed among and between the five countries sampled. That is, we tested whether the change in the dependent variable in one country is different from the change in the dependent variable in another country.

Results

The results of the tests were all statistically significant and in the expected direction with one exception, supporting H1 (see Table 3). Commitment, morale, tension, self-awareness of interactive skills, self-awareness of controlling skills, use of interactive skills, and effectiveness as rated by either superior or direct reports all improved for the over-

all sample. There was no significant improvement in the use of controlling skills. Thus, the results suggest that the 360 feedback process did create actionable knowledge for the overall sample.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that affective responses (reaction) would be more positive where values consistent with the 360 feedback process prevail (low power distance, low uncertainty avoidance, individualism, and control over the environment). Table 4 presents the results of the analysis testing H2. Overall, the data supported the predicted influence of culture. Both the United States and Ireland were significantly different from Malaysia, and Ireland showed stronger positive changes than the other countries.

Power distance and individualism seem to be important values in the observed differences because Malaysia and Ireland represent opposite extremes on these values within our sample. In Malaysia, morale and commitment decreased and tension increased, while the opposite was true in Ireland.

Hypothesis 3 focused on the role of self-aware-

TABLE 3
Paired Samples Statistics for t_1 vs. t_2 for Overall Sample

Variables		M	N	SD	Difference t1-t2	t	df	Sig.
Employees' Reactions								
Pair 1	Commitment at t1	5.6422	3365	.59602	-.0353	-2.733	3364	.003
	Commitment at t2	5.6776	3365	.55950				
Pair 2	Morale at t1	5.0448	3362	.86995	-.0329	-1.765	3361	.039
	Morale at t2	5.0777	3362	.81112				
Pair 3	Tension at t1	3.3144	3363	.92133	.0395	2.062	3362	.020
	Tension at t2	3.2749	3363	.87052				
Managers' Cognitions								
Pair 4	Self-Awareness of Interactive Skills at t1	.8883	2989	.68724	.0621	3.830	2988	.000
	Self-Awareness of Interactive Skills at t2	.8262	2989	.64569				
	Self-Awareness of Controlling Skills at t1	.8592	3005	.67787				
Pair 5	Self-Awareness of Controlling Skills at t1	.8147	3005	.63581	.0445	2.806	3004	.003
	Self-Awareness of Controlling Skills at t2							
Change in Managers' Behaviors								
Pair 6	Interactive Skills at t1	-.0014	3363	.91270	-.0969	-5.071	3362	.000
	Interactive Skills at t2	.0955	3363	.88085				
Pair 7	Controlling Skills at t1	-.0019	3370	.99469	-.0117	-.640	3369	.261
	Controlling Skills at t2	.0098	3370	.96077				
Change in Managers' Outcomes								
Pair 8	Effectiveness as Rated by Superior at t1	5.2532	1837	.79057	-.1420	-6.301	1836	.000
	Effectiveness as Rated by Superior at t2	5.3951	1837	.79292				
	Effectiveness as Rated by Direct Reports at t1	5.4737	2611	.68694				
Pair 9	Effectiveness as Rated by Direct Reports at t1	5.5265	2611	.63812	-.0528	-3.226	2610	.001
	Effectiveness as Rated by Direct Reports at t2							

TABLE 4
Employees' Reaction Due to Actionable Knowledge via the 360 Process

Countries	N	Subset for alpha = .05		
		1	2	3
Change in Morale From t1-t2				
Malaysia	285	-.1895		
Philippines	172	-.0249	-.0249	
Israel	171	.0142	.0142	
United States	2287		.0565	
Ireland	117			.3293
Sig.		.071	.478	1.000
Change in Commitment t1-t2				
Malaysia	285	-.2109		
Israel	170		.0083	
Philippines	173		.0209	
United States	2290		.0617	
Ireland	117			.2470
Sig.		1.000	.500	1.000
Change in Tension t1-t2				
Ireland	117	-.1811		
United States	2289	-.0512	-.0512	
Israel	171	-.0458	-.0458	
Malaysia	283		.0805	
Philippines	173		.1777	
Sig.		.245	.054	

Note. Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

ness (cognitions) in the 360 feedback process; greater improvements in self-awareness were expected in cultures with low power distance and individualistic values. Self-awareness was represented by the relative agreement on the level and use of interactive and controlling skills between the manager and subordinates. The data showed marginal support for H3 (see Table 5). Improvements in self-awareness of controlling skills were greater in the United States. In Malaysia, however, self-awareness declined, suggesting again that the values of low power distance and individualism are important to the efficacy of the 360 feedback process. For interactive skills, the changes were not statistically different.

Changes in the use of interactive and controlling skills (behaviors) were considered necessary for improved managerial effectiveness. Hypotheses 4a and 4b predicted that cultural values would affect the level of skills use. Managers in Ireland and the United States showed significant improvements in their use of interactive skills, while managers in Malaysia showed a regression in the use of these skills. Marginal support was found for differences in the predicted changes in the use of controlling skills. Comparing the values of Malaysia and Israel (see Table 1), whose managers exhibited high negative controlling behaviors, (see

Table 6) with those of the United States, demonstrating positive controlling behaviors, it appears that low uncertainty avoidance and masculine values may play a role in changes in the use of con-

TABLE 5
Managers' Cognitions Due to Actionable Knowledge via the 360 Process

		Subset for alpha = .05
Countries	N	1
Change in Self-Awareness of Interactive Skills t1-t2		
Malaysia	263	-.0431
Israel	154	-.0397
Philippines	158	.0155
Ireland	100	.0823
United States	2028	.0884
Sig.		.212
Change in Self-Awareness of Controlling Skills t1-t2		
Malaysia	262	-.1008
Israel	155	-.0045
Ireland	101	.0116
Philippines	160	.0245
United States	2040	.0707
Sig.		.091

Note. Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

TABLE 6
Change in Managers' Behaviors Due to
Actionable Knowledge via the 360 Process

		Subset for alpha = .05		
Countries	N	1	2	3
Changes in Interactive Skills t1-t2				
Malaysia	284	-.1428		
Israel	170	-.0855	-.0855	
Philippines	173	.0458	.0458	.0458
United States	2291		.1169	.1169
Ireland	117			.1902
Sig.		.103	.079	.214
Change in Controlling Skills t1-t2				
Malaysia	284	-.1840		
Israel	171	-.1549		
Ireland	117	-.0347		
Philippines	174	-.0112		
United States	2296	.0352		
Sig.		.058		

Note. Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

trolling skills as affected by the 360 feedback process.

Finally, outcomes of the 360 feedback process as measured by evaluating the manager's effectiveness are reported in Table 7. The changes in both the supervisors' and subordinates' ratings were considered, and the data revealed that changes in

the supervisors' ratings of effectiveness were not statistically different among the national samples, contrary to Hypothesis 5a. All the countries showed positive changes in effectiveness ratings. This finding may be the result of the maturation effect where seniority would be associated with higher effectiveness ratings. In addition, ratings from superiors are more acceptable across cultures.

However, the data show support for Hypothesis 5b in the predicted direction. Changes in effectiveness as rated by subordinates were significantly larger in Ireland and the Philippines as compared to Malaysia. Based on power distance, we expected the difference in managerial outcomes between Ireland and Malaysia, but did not expect the Philippines to differ from Malaysia on this variable. It is possible that the difference in masculine values between Malaysia and the Philippines may also account for some of the observed changes in managerial outcomes as perceived by subordinates.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the effectiveness of 360 feedback process interventions for creating actionable knowledge equally across cultures. Our results show that the process is relevant, but most effective in cultures low on power distance with individualistic values. Uncertainty avoidance and masculinity may also influence the learning pro-

TABLE 7
Change in Managers' Outcomes Due to Actionable Knowledge via the 360 Process

		Subset for alpha = .05		
Countries	N	1		
Change in Boss Rated Effectiveness t1-t2				
Israel	100	.0729		
Philippines	98	.0998		
United States	1162	.1345		
Malaysia	218	.1559		
Ireland	68	.2040		
Sig.		.353		
Change in Direct Report Rated Effectiveness t1-t2				
Countries	N	1	2	3
Malaysia	270	-.1111		
Israel	127	.0187	.0187	
United States	1659	.0631	.0631	.0631
Philippines	166		.1181	.1181
Ireland	97			.2131
Sig.		.067	.301	.116

Note. Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

cess relative to self-awareness, necessary for improvement in skill development. These findings suggest a broader implication with respect to cultural orientations toward feedback in general. It appears that some cultures view feedback as a glass half full or an opportunity to improve, while others see it as one that is half empty or simply as criticism.

This study draws our attention to the need to further explore the psychosocial differences in the way people process feedback and how culture influences these processes. In addition to the cultural context, future studies should consider the facilitating conditions of feedback, such as skill training, incentives, and a supportive climate as Seifert, Yukl, and McDonald (2003) have suggested. While Thach (2002) found 360 feedback and coaching to be a very effective tool for improving managerial outcomes and developing organizational capacities, OD efforts within multinationals that fail to consider the interaction between culture and feedback may be disappointing.

The results found here have important implications for international HR development practices in multinational corporations. Organizations that strongly internalize the values of low power distance and individualism could benefit greatly from applying the 360 feedback process. Furthermore, in these cultures, the process might be used to assess a manager's competencies for operating in different cultures. New approaches (e.g., Earley & Peterson, 2004) to cross-cultural training call for not only content but also a need to focus on the cognitions, motivations, and behaviors of trainees similar to that provided by the 360 feedback process for organizational training.

The application of an intervention in cultures whose values are inconsistent with those inherent to the 360 feedback process may be detrimental in a number of areas. For example, the Malaysian participants showed consistent declines in employee reaction, cognitions (e.g., self-awareness), and behaviors (e.g., skill development). These negative effects resulted in lower outcomes (e.g., subordinate ratings of the manager's effectiveness).

Conversely, in countries where values are consistent with the 360 feedback process, such as Ireland, managers demonstrate great improvements in cognitions (self-awareness) and behaviors (skill use). These are reflected in improved employee reactions (e.g., attitudes) and outcomes (ratings of effectiveness).

It is important to note that countries with value profiles that were the polar opposite of each other on Hofstede's (2001) four values showed significant differences between the 360 feedback process and

various outcomes. Those nations whose value profiles were either more moderate on all (i.e., Israel) or a subset (i.e., U.S. and Philippines) of these values often revealed no significant differences. These results suggest that all four values together appear to be important in influencing the relationship between the 360 feedback process and development assessment criteria. Moreover, other cultural dimensions not conceptualized here may also play a role in explaining culture's impact on these relationships. An important implication is that for nations whose values do not differ a great deal from those implicit in the process or for whom only one value differs greatly, it still may be possible to adapt and use the 360 feedback process to achieve the desired results. This latter implication requires further investigation.

The collection and dissemination of feedback are pervasive within the U.S. educational context. Our findings would urge caution in the blanket adoption of the 360 feedback process for pedagogical and administrative development in colleges and universities as management and graduate education becomes globalized like business. Given that both students and faculty may come from cultures with values inconsistent with the process, we would expect 360 feedback to be at times ineffective or worse detrimental to the learning environment or institutional objectives.

The instructional value of increasing student awareness of the 360 feedback process and its potential cross-cultural limitations is, on the other hand, underscored by the results of this study. Because 360 feedback is used by a number of large multinational companies, students pursuing undergraduate and graduate business education who represent the future managers and leaders in those companies would benefit from this knowledge. By understanding the cultural implications involved, students would appreciate the need to adapt to differences in cultural values within multinational organizations seeking to employ the 360 feedback process for development or evaluation purposes.

Summary

This study adds to the body of knowledge in understanding why and when the 360 feedback process is effective as a management or pedagogical development intervention. Feedback must be given within the context of a broader objective, that is, to reveal areas where further skill improvements are needed and provide a mechanism and support structure to effect the changes. Most important, the utility of the 360 feedback process de-

pend largely upon the cultural values held by participants.

This study, like most other studies, has a number of limitations. One is that we were able to test only the cultures for which we had data. We do not have data from some of the clusters of countries identified by Hofstede (2001), such as Nordic and Germanic countries. It should be noted, however, that some significant differences were found among countries. Other studies have also found significant differences in self-awareness and effectiveness among different countries (Shipper, Kincaid, Rotondo, & Hoffman, 2003). Our study did not take into account differences in the actual process that may have occurred, nor was the effectiveness of various stages in the 360 process tested. There is no way to be certain, for example, that the creation of learning contracts actually occurred or indeed made a difference in the level of performance feedback gathered. Thus, additional research focusing on variants in the 360 feedback process would appear both warranted and prudent in other cultures.

Another limitation is that this study was carried out using only one 360 feedback process based on one particular model of managerial skills and its associated questionnaire. This instrument was selected because of its psychometric soundness and prior use in cross-cultural research (e.g., Offermann & Hellmann, 1997). As has been pointed out in reviews of 360 instruments over the years, not all such instruments meet even basic criteria of psychometric soundness. In fact, the instrument selected is the only one that met the basic criteria for inclusion in all three reviews (Leslie & Fleenor, 1998; Morrison, McCall, & DeVries, 1978; Van Velsor & Leslie, 1991). Thus, extending these results to the use of other 360 instruments without testing them first could lead to erroneous conclusions.

Furthermore, this study was carried out with data from only one multinational company. The intent of using data from only one organization is to limit confounding variance. If, however, the culture of the company varies across international boundaries, the results may be limited to the organization. Given that this organization is known for having a strong unifying culture, this limitation is unlikely. The use of data from one company with a strong culture may also attenuate the possible unknown variation in the processes used, as mentioned above, which may affect the usefulness of 360 feedback.

In conclusion, our research supports the claim that such practically useful knowledge can be acquired by managers participating in the 360 feedback process. Improved managerial skills and effectiveness are likely outcomes of the dynamic and

iterative learning cycle inherent in this process. However, caution must be exercised in the application of the process in cultures having values contrary to those underlying 360 feedback.

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